

# THE EDITORS' ROLE IN MEDIA INTEGRITY PROTECTION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## BETWEEN STRONG INTERFERENCE AND WEAK SUPPORT

by SANELA HODŽIĆ

### INTRODUCTION

The role and position of editors in media outlets seem to be neglected topics in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Editors are expected to hold the pivotal role in media integrity protection, but in practice editors in Bosnia and Herzegovina mainly keep a low-profile and rarely get either major public recognition or critique. The general circumstances in the media sector are inevitably taking their toll on the role and position of editors. Political parallelism has never decreased. The media are often part of networks of conflicting relations and financially dependent on a few sources of revenue, while profit is often the only guiding principle of media operations. All of this inevitably determines the policies behind the appointment of media editors, the circumstances under which they work and ultimately the role they perform.

This research report aims at outlining the position and the role of media editors in BiH. It is based on a research study conducted from March to May 2016, involving review of secondary sources, five in-depth interviews and a small-scale survey,<sup>1</sup> all aiming to outline the patterns of labour status, professional credentials, socio-economic position, political background and appointments of editors. The sections below are organised around these main issues.

Before going into the current situation of editors, one should first recall the recent history. It is worth mentioning that appointments of media editors based on ideological criteria date back to Bosnia and Herzegovina being

---

1 Ten completed questionnaires, out of 25 distributed. Three respondents requested complete anonymity (not mentioning their names or specifics about their post), and two more a partial anonymity (not ascribing some answers to their names). It was mostly because of unspecified personal preferences not to expose themselves in public, while in one case it was because the respondent intended to express critique over his/her employers without risking repercussions for his/her post or working conditions. This is possibly indicative of the general patterns that hinder the public discussion about the role and position of the media editors.

---

part of ex-Yugoslavia, when editors would strictly follow the course set by the Communist Party. It took one major corruption affair in which major party officials were involved (the one concerning the Agrokomerc company, which occurred in August-September 1987) to finally shake the political system in such a way that it became fragmented along particular lines of interest, which subsequently fragmented and in a way loosened the grip over the media.<sup>2</sup> In the course of these developments, government influence over the appointment of editors was weakened, so that, “for the first time the newsrooms chose the editors alone, among several candidates,” said Boro Kontić, long-standing media professional and the current director of Media Center Sarajevo, adding: “Among others, this is how I became editor of Second programme of Radio Sarajevo in 1990.” However, these changes were clearly not an indicator of systemic liberalisation and media freedoms, but rather of a weakened state. The interference in media still continued through party officials and intelligence services, but between the various interest groups within the party, the media could now grab the opportunities for gaining some freedom.<sup>3</sup> By 1991 the popularity of nationalistic parties had already strengthened, and they made strong demands to appoint party-appropriate editors. While this was stopped at the time,<sup>4</sup> it was in December 1992 – the first year of the war (1992-1995) – that the then-editors of *RTV Bosnia and Herzegovina* were dismissed and then began the “era of direct influence,” as Kontić named it. Since then, the actors and circumstances have changed; the media professionals that once held distinguished positions are for the most part no longer active, and the ownership patterns have been transformed from state media to public and private media. However, the ambitions and mechanisms of control persisted and continued to determine the role and the position of editors at media outlets. As this report will indicate, the role and position of editors have been degraded in many ways.

---

2 The affair concerning Agrokomerc became public in August 1987, after the *Borba* newspapers from Belgrade published an article in which the company was accused of issuing promissory notes without coverage. This not only implied business irregularities, misuse, bribery, corruption and inappropriate use of funds, with the involvement of Fikret Abdić, a member of the Central Committee, but also indicated the failure of state authorities to discover and prevent these irregularities. After this major affair, the BH media soon uncovered other scandals, which further compromised the system.

3 See Loza, “Afere koje su pokretale naše ‘vlastite novine’,” *Mediacentar\_online*, 8 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.media.ba/bs/mediametar/afere-koje-su-pokretale-nase-vlastite-novine>. Accessed 31 April 2016.

4 The Constitutional court of BiH has, however, decided against such direct involvement. See more in Kurspahić 2003.

---

There are no general media laws that specifically address the position and role of media editors and are relevant for all sectors and types of media. However, regulation pertaining to public broadcasters involves references to the political independence of the editors-in-chief.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, both Rule 77/2015 on Provision of Audio-visual Media Services, and rule 76/2015 on Provision of Radio Media Services, under Article 31, stipulate that the editor-in-chief cannot be a person acting as a public official or a member of any body of political party, list of independent candidates, coalitions or organisations established by a political subject. The same article stipulates the obligation of the editor to submit a statement to the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) confirming that the abovementioned requirement is fulfilled. Private media outlets across various sectors (print, broadcasting or online) do not have similar stipulations concerning the independence of editors.

The responsibility of the editors towards the public is only implied in the general professional norms for broadcasting, but in the press and online media sectors the role of editors is explicitly addressed in the requirements to ensure truthful reporting, fairness and honesty, and to avoid plagiarism and falsifications, as well as bribes or favours that could influence their work (Code for Press and Online Media, Article 2).<sup>6</sup> Ljiljana Zurovac, director of the Press Council in BIH (PC) reports that the majority of editors today respond positively to the work of the PC in the efforts to implement professional norms.<sup>7</sup> An overview of the complaints processed by the PC illustrates that editors hold a central role in the mediation process: during 2015, 16 complaints were settled after retractions

AN OVERVIEW OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCESSED BY THE PC ILLUSTRATES THAT EDITORS HOLD A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE MEDIATION PROCESS: DURING 2015, 16 COMPLAINTS WERE SETTLED AFTER RETRACTIONS BY EDITORS.

<sup>5</sup> A public television stations is one for which one of the following applies:

- a) the founder is the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, entity, Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canton, city and/or municipality (political and territorial community);
- b) the founder is an administrative organisation or other administrative body of a political and territorial community under a point a) of paragraph (1) of this Article, or an institution with public authorities of the political and territorial community under a point a) of paragraph (1) of this Article;
- c) it has been established under a public-private partnership model, whereby the legal entities under points a) and/or point b) of paragraph (1) of this Article have more than a 51 percent share in the property or financing. (Rule 77/2015, Article 28).

<sup>6</sup> For example, the general *right to reply* is specified in the Code of Audio-Visual Media Services and in the Press Code, but these do not include specific references to the responsibility of editors; exercising the journalistic principle of the right to reply works in the favour of an editor/media outlet that is undergoing a libel lawsuit, given that it provides proof that the author/editor/publisher did his best to publish truthful information.

<sup>7</sup> Ljiljana Zurovac, director, Press Council in BIH, telephone interview, 26 April 2016.

by editors. On the other hand, breaches of Article 2 were found in 11 cases out of an overall 173 complaints in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

The public service system of BIH – *Radio and Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHRT)*, *Radio and Television of the Federation of BIH (RTVFBIH)* and *Radio and Television of the Republic of Srpska (RTRS)* – have additionally adopted the internal editorial principles. They mostly restate the general principles of journalism, such as accuracy or fair reporting, and involve general requirements that programming should not be influenced for any conflict of interest. However, the editorial principles do not specify the responsibilities of editors nor do they define what specifically constitutes conflict of interest.<sup>9</sup> Other media rarely adopt similar norms.<sup>10</sup> An exception is, for example, the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN). The editor-in-chief, Aladin Abdagić, notes that CIN internal regulations oblige them to publish corrections of false quotations, but the editor decides whether a reaction to a story involving additional details about the story will be published or not.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.1

### NO GUARANTEES FOR EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE

The media laws and regulations do not involve specific guarantees of editorial independence. Thus, the procedures for appointing editors are far from being independent, while funding is often directly dependent on particular actors that the media should be reporting about. This is particularly straightforward in the case of local public broadcasters – 12 local public TV broadcasters and 61 local public radio broadcasters (out of 43 TV and 139 radio stations overall) are directly funded by municipal and cantonal governments. There are virtually no assurances that the directors and editors of these media are not chosen based on political loyalty, and no assurances of continuous funding in case of critical reporting about the government.

Similarly, editors are hardly in a position to engage in media reporting that goes against the interest of the owners of private media. One participant in this study, the editor of a private media outlet, admits experiencing direct pressure

THE MEDIA LAWS AND REGULATIONS DO NOT INVOLVE SPECIFIC GUARANTEES OF EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE. EDITORS ARE HARDLY IN A POSITION TO ENGAGE IN MEDIA REPORTING THAT GOES AGAINST THE INTEREST OF THE OWNERS.

8 Press Council in BIH, Outline of Citizens' Complaints Regarding the Writing of Press and Online Media in 2015. Available at: [http://english.vzs.ba/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2079%3Ayear-2015&catid=22%3Acases-outline&Itemid=23&lang=en](http://english.vzs.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2079%3Ayear-2015&catid=22%3Acases-outline&Itemid=23&lang=en). Accessed 30 March 2016.

9 Article 6.3. of both the Ethical Code of *RTVFBIH* and the Ethical Code of *RTRS*. For example, it is only indicted that superiors decide about possible conflict of interest in particular cases, taking into account the level of political engagement, the nature of work of the employee and the level of his/her engagement and decision-making in the creation of the programme. No criteria are provided on the basis of which conflict of interest should be judged.

10 These documents are mostly not publicly available, the entailed norms are not publicly promoted by the media community, and they are virtually unknown to the general public.

11 Written reply by Aladin Abdagić, editor-in-chief, Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), April 2016.

and believes it to be a ubiquitous practice: *“Any editor who says he has not encountered such a thing is lying! More specifically, certain political structures were pressuring me through the owner to publish their ‘greetings and wishes’ ... Have I done it? Mostly no, but mostly! Some ‘yes’ slipped in too.”* Or in the words of another respondent: *“It was funny to me sometimes when public figures would make suggestions to me while I was at Oslobodenje [a private daily] along this line: ‘You will show your independence when you write an article critical of the owner.’ It reflects a somewhat different notion of reality. Of course, in case of certain criminal cases, fascism or other similar cases, one should go against the will of the owner, but the owners word is still the ultimate one in profiling the editorial policy that you follow or mould, or you try to resist and go directly against it and you do not last long.”*<sup>12</sup> One respondent in particular mentions that lack of transparency concerning the ownership and financing of media outlets further aggravates the problem, by keeping the possible influences on editorial policies out of the public sight.<sup>13</sup>

Some media, however, regulate editorial independence at the level of internal organisation with relative success, and provide some guarantees through better protection of editors from arbitrary decisions by the media owners. In the course of this research, television *N1* was mentioned as a positive exception in this regard. As the *N1* former news director Zoran Stevanović wrote, *“I haven’t been in a position that someone tried to influence me in the sense of making or changing editorial decisions, for two reasons: the first and the major one is that the owner of the media outlet insisted on and supported editorial autonomy and the decisions that were made (although he did not agree with them on a few occasions), and the second one is that the contract did clearly protect editorial autonomy [...] The Editorial Board was the only body in which editorial decisions were questioned.”*<sup>14</sup> In contrast, an editor at a public service broadcaster reports: *“There is no clear and efficient protection in cases where editors disagree with the management of the media outlet for which I work.”*<sup>15</sup>

Finally, media financed by international donors are mentioned by respondents for their perceived greater independence from the local power-holders, which should be primarily under public scrutiny. However, this dependence on donor support is perceived as another source of insecurity for editors in terms of their livelihood. Željka Mihaljević, editor at a local radio station in Livno,<sup>16</sup> indicates that it is especially hard for media outside of the big towns to access

MEDIA FINANCED BY INTERNATIONAL DONORS ARE MENTIONED BY RESPONDENTS FOR THEIR PERCEIVED GREATER INDEPENDENCE FROM THE LOCAL POWER-HOLDERS, WHICH SHOULD BE PRIMARILY UNDER PUBLIC SCRUTINY.

12 Interview with Faruk Borić, director of *FENA* news agency and member of the Council of Communications Regulatory Agency, Sarajevo, 8 April 2016.

13 See more on this in previous SEE Media Observatory reports, the latest being Hodzic 2015. Available at: <http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/media-integrity-report-state-media-financial-relations-bosnia-and-herzegovina>. Accessed 27 March 2016.

14 Written reply to questionnaire by Zoran Stojanović, former news director, *N1*, April 2016.

15 Written reply to questionnaire by an editor at a public service broadcaster, April 2016.

16 Željka Mihaljević, editor-in-chief, *Radio Studio N*, telephone interview, 10 April 2016.

revenue from international sources, and that in circumstances of decreased donor presence, only long-standing integrity helps in assuring their support.

## 1.2

### POOR CONDITIONS FOR EDITORIAL INTEGRITY IN THE APPOINTMENTS AND DISMISSALS

The independent procedures and sound professional criteria for the appointments of editors are often missing at media outlets in BiH. There is an overall atmosphere of secrecy in the procedures of both appointments and demotions of editors. The job positions and criteria are rarely publicly announced, and more often the editors are appointed in closed procedures, with only the final decision being communicated to the public (if anything at all).

In private media the owners/directors have absolute discretionary powers to appoint and dismiss editors. The decisions are considered to be guided by the personal preferences of directors, who are not necessarily familiar with the journalistic profession, by financial rationales and, finally, on criteria of loyalty and conformism with the interests of the owners and their affiliates. The arbitrary nature of such decisions is illustrated by the words of our respondent: *“The criteria and procedures for the appointment of editors are not clearly and adequately specified. More precisely, the only relevant criterion in choosing the editor is the decision of the owner...”* who added: *“I was appointed literally in this way – the director called me to his office and told me ‘From 1 October you are taking over the position of editor; if you don’t like it, you can go home.’ It’s the job I was making my living from, so of course I have accepted.”*<sup>17</sup>

At public service broadcasters, the Director General is also entitled to appoint the editors (as specified in the statutes of *BHRT*, *RTVFBiH* and *RTRS*). Despite the stipulations that should prevent conflicts of interest and political bias on the part of editors,<sup>18</sup> it is a common practice that in public media outlets (including three PSB and 73 local public TV and radio broadcasters), the editors are in fact appointed based on their loyalty to the ruling political party at the administrative level in question.<sup>19</sup>

17 Written reply by an editor-in-chief of a private media outlet, April 2016.

18 Including the abovementioned Rules 76 and 77 from 2015, but also the laws on public companies. The Law on Public Enterprises in the Republic of Srpska, for example, stipulates that any employee of a public company should avoid conflicts of interest; conflict of interest is specified as any professional or personal interests that conflict or might conflict or appear to conflict with the interests and the work of the company, or conflict with the capacity of an employee to fulfil his/her obligations and commitments within the company; the employee is obliged to provide insight to the management about any situation that could lead to conflict of interests (Article 13); the Law on Public Enterprises in the Federation of BiH involves similar stipulations under Article 14.

19 See, for example, more about the controversies concerning appointments at the public press agency *SRNA*, at: <http://www.zurnal.info/novost/14911/-u-podmukloj-borbi-rajko-vasic-nokautirao-dragana-davidovica>. Accessed 30 March 2016.

DESPITE THE STIPULATIONS THAT SHOULD PREVENT CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND POLITICAL BIAS ON THE PART OF EDITORS, IT IS A COMMON PRACTICE THAT IN PUBLIC MEDIA OUTLETS (INCLUDING THREE PSB AND 73 LOCAL PUBLIC TV AND RADIO BROADCASTERS), THE EDITORS ARE IN FACT APPOINTED BASED ON THEIR LOYALTY TO THE RULING POLITICAL PARTY AT THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL IN QUESTION.



In private and public media alike, consultations with journalists are not a part of appointment and demotion procedures. Only one of the participants in this study, who worked for a media organisation registered as an NGO, mentioned that consultations with employees are a regular practice. Such consultations are mostly recognised by respondents as a necessary buffer from the arbitrary decisions of media managers and in general a step towards greater leverage of professional criteria in these procedures.

The procedures for demotions and dismissals are equally non-transparent. The labour laws mention the general justifications for dismissals, but these are imprecise and allow inconsistent interpretations.<sup>20</sup> Labour rulebooks, if adopted in media organisations, further specify the reasons for dismissals or demotions, including violation of internal procedures, inflicting damage on the broadcaster in a financial sense, or in terms of its public image, in case of criminal behaviour etc., but also: “*behaviour conflicting with the rules of programming and business policy and editorial guidelines of RTVFBiH, disrespect for the codex, recommendations and decisions of the Regulatory agency for communications of BiH and other international organizations*”, as well as “*transmitting unchecked information in programs that results in disturbance of the public and harm to the public image and damage to the Public RTV System of BiH*” (Udovičić 2015, p. 14).<sup>21</sup> However, as will be demonstrated in the examples below, the internal norms were not sufficient to prevent controversial demotions on several occasions.<sup>22</sup>

---

20 For example, it is specified that an employee can be dismissed when there are “certain economic, technical or organisational reasons” because of which there is no longer a need for the specific work post; furthermore, an employer can fire a person in case of “severe violation of work obligations,” but criteria on which to judge the severity of the violations are not specified (Articles 87 and 88 of Labour Law of FBiH).

21 The document Overview of Work Posts at RTVFBiH specifies the conditions for the position of editor, including the Executive programme director, who holds the highest editorial responsibility, and several editorial positions. The conditions are similar for all of these: university degree, 5 years of experience (or up to 5, or a minimum of 3 years, as some posts require) in the same or a similar position, command of foreign language and computer skills. The same documents lists the responsibilities of editors. Available at: <http://www.rtvfbih.ba/doc/dopune%20pregleda%20radnih%20mjesta%20mart%202013.pdf>. Accessed 28 April 2016. A respondent confirms that the internal documents specify that editors cannot work for concurrent media. The Ethical codex and Labour Rulebook, he adds, specify the rights and duties of editors and journalists.

22 The controversies do not pertain to FTV alone. For example, the previous director of BHRT, Muhamed Bakarević, gave appointments to several persons, some of which positions were not envisaged by internal documents, as employees pointed out. See <http://doznajemo.com/2013/01/02/ne-stisava-se-bura-na-bhrt-u-u-pitanju-sudbina-gotovo-1-000-radnika/>. Accessed 30 March 2016.

---

## 2 FORMALLY SOUND LABOUR STATUS, BUT INSECURITIES IN PRACTICE

Editors are employed mostly based on indefinite work contracts, while short-term contracts, or engagement on an occasional and task basis, are common in media organisations, but are mostly limited to journalists. Some exceptions are possible, with “*some editors of even very influential media working without contracts,*” says one survey respondent. Secondary sources suggest that the violation of labour rights in media outlets is most often related to salaries, working conditions, length of the working day and health and pension security payments.<sup>23</sup> One respondent in this study reported that he was denied several salary payments and that related health and pension contributions can go unpaid for months.

Media outlets, as it is the case with any legal entity that employs a minimum of 15 persons (in RS) or 30 persons (in FBiH), are obliged to adopt a work rulebook that involves specification of work posts.<sup>24</sup> In some media outlets the internal document on the systematisation of work positions might also include further specification. These documents are more commonly adopted at public than at private media outlets.<sup>25</sup> While some of these documents might provide better definition of relations between the editors and the media outlets, the implementation mechanisms are weak, violations are not rare,<sup>26</sup> and ultimately these documents do not necessarily contribute to the legal security of editors.

---

23 See Hodžić 2007, Udovičić 2015.

24 The Labour Law of FBiH adopted in July 2015 stipulates a requirement that the Labour rulebook, inter alia, involves the systematisation of work positions and special circumstances in labour relations. The previous law stipulated the obligation to adopt a Labour rulebook for each employer with a minimum of 15 workers, and this change exempting smaller businesses from this obligation was, inter alia, criticised by the Association of Trade Unions of BiH. The newly adopted Labour Law in the Republic of Srpska, however, kept the limit of 15 workers in this stipulation.

25 However, these are not available on the websites, including those of three public service broadcasters (*RTRS*, *RTVFBiH* and *BHRT*); neither could we access these documents through contact with the editors.

26 For example, in 2012 the employees of public service broadcasters warned of the illegality of the current Rulebook on Systematisation of Work Posts at this broadcaster, given that it was being implemented although it had not been adopted by the Managerial Board, but that it also failed to envisage few work positions that did in fact exist in the management structure. See <http://doznajemo.com/2013/01/17/ostajemo-bez-tv-programa-radnici-bhrt-a-pripremanju-strajk/>. Accessed 30 March 2016.

EDITORS ARE EMPLOYED MOSTLY BASED ON INDEFINITE WORK CONTRACTS, WHILE SHORT-TERM CONTRACTS, OR ENGAGEMENT ON AN OCCASIONAL AND TASK BASIS, ARE COMMON IN MEDIA ORGANISATIONS, BUT ARE MOSTLY LIMITED TO JOURNALISTS.



Štefica Galić and Amer Bahtijar, editors of the *tacno.net* website, were attacked in February 2015, by verbal insults and threats of physical violence.<sup>27</sup> Similar verbal insults and threats were addressed to Siniša Vukelić, editor of the *capital.ba* website, in October 2014;<sup>28</sup> but most distressingly, the death threats that he received two years earlier, in October 2012, from a controversial businessman Mile Radišić, were never resolved in court.

Members of the media community have continually expressed dissatisfaction with judicial inefficiency in dealing with threats against and attacks on editors and journalists. Borka Rudić, secretary general of the Association of BH Journalists, stated that out of 65 cases of threats against and attacks on journalists registered between 2006 and 2015, only nine cases were resolved in the journalists' favour.<sup>29</sup> Some of the most blatant cases have been dragged through the process for several years. It is worth noting that the Association of BH Journalists provides legal support to journalists and editors suffering pressure from within or outside of their media outlets. However, respondents in this study point to a general lack of solidarity, as well as fragmentation along ethnic and political lines, which together render the support of the professional and wider community partial and inconsistent. One of the rare examples of joint support, across entity and ethnic lines, happened in December 2014, as a protest against the police raid on the *klix.ba* website.<sup>30</sup>

It is indicative that editors who participated in this research mention three types of processes in which they have been implicated: threats from outside the media outlet, coming from criminal circles (Berislav Jurić, editor of *bljesak.info*), pressures by political actors through management structures from within

27 While one of the attackers was reportedly known for similar behaviour, the other one was allegedly an employee of the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA). See <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/urednike-portala-tacno-net-u-mostaru-napao-uposlenik-sipa-e/150102084>. Accessed 13 March 2016. Further information on the identity of these attackers was never released.

28 See <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/novinar-sinisa-vukelic-napadnut-u-banjoj-luci/141009086>. Accessed 17 March 2016.

29 See <http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/genetically-modified-media>. Accessed 17 March 2016.

30 The police raid was related to a leaked recording concerning bribery of MPs for assuring a parliamentary majority in RS. The police were seeking the original recording of a conversation between the Prime Minister of RS and another person, which caused a political scandal in RS. See <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/nakon-upada-policije-u-klix-novinarstvo-nije-zlocin/26769536.html>. Accessed 17 March 2016. The FBiH government subsequently ruled that the raid was unlawful and in violation of human rights and national laws. See <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/jerinic-upad-u-prostorije-klix-ba-drastican-pritisak-na-medije/141229078> and <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/bh-novinari-2015-je-godina-borbe-za-slobodu-medija-i-prava-novinara-u-bih/150105111>. Accessed 17 March 2016.

RESPONDENTS IN THIS STUDY POINT TO A GENERAL LACK OF SOLIDARITY, AS WELL AS FRAGMENTATION ALONG ETHNIC AND POLITICAL LINES, WHICH TOGETHER RENDER THE SUPPORT OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND WIDER COMMUNITY PARTIAL AND INCONSISTENT.

the media (editor-in-chief of a private media outlet), and finally involvement in complaints procedures (managed by CRA) and court libel cases (as mentioned by several editors).<sup>31</sup> In the majority of these cases, the editors relied on support from within their media organisations in the case of lawsuits or external pressure. However, libel law does not distinguish the editors' responsibilities from the responsibilities of the author or the publisher. While in most cases it happens that the media outlets bear the financial responsibilities during court cases,<sup>32</sup> one editor participating in the study reported that publisher had not provided legal support on a few occasions and instead it was the editor who had to cover the expenses.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4 LIMITED ENGAGEMENT OF EDITORS IN COLLECTIVE ORGANISING

There are no separate professional associations of editors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but some editors are members of the general organisations for journalist and trade unions. This includes, for example, the Association of BH Journalists, which counts around 700 members, of which “one third, if not more” are editors, as reported by the association’s secretary general Borka Rudić.<sup>34</sup> Rudić also points out that the editors are relatively active, participating in conferences and seminars and supporting actions on behalf of media freedom. However, “they are not particularly vocal when their media are concerned.”<sup>35</sup> Our search through the information on the web sites of international organisations such as EFJ, IFJ, IPI, SEEMO, EBU and WAN-IFRA showed that there are no names of BH editors listed among the members of their boards or committees. However, some media outlets or associations do hold such memberships (for example, public RTV service of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a member of EBU; one owner of an advertis-

---

31 Completed questionnaires were received in April 2016.

32 Written reply by Mehmed Halilović, media law expert, 26 April 2016. The Libel Law stipulates that the “author, responsible editor, publisher and any person that in other way supervises the content ...” are all held accountable (Libel Law of FBiH, Article 6, paragraph 2), but it is not clear how the burden of the court process is to be shared among them, which produces legal uncertainty for the editors. In practice, the plaintiff can choose whether to address the lawsuit against the journalist, editor or the media outlet i.e. publisher.

33 The respondents mentioned that on a few occasions he had to engage a lawyer himself, without support from the media outlet where he works. He also reports that one of these lawsuits was about an article published without his supervision, while he was on vacation, but that this did not exempt him from participating in the libel proceeding. Written reply to questionnaire by a private media editor, April 2016.

34 Borka Rudić, secretary general, Association of BH Journalists, telephone interview, 26 April 2016.

35 The participants in this study mentioned also membership in other journalists' associations (one in the Association of Court Reporters and one in the Association of Croat Journalists).

---

ing agency is a member of SEEMO, and the Union of Independent Newspaper Publishers is a member of WAN-IFRA). The Association of BH Journalists is a member of EFJ and IFJ, and as Rudić reports, of 700 members of the Association of BH Journalists, 120 are also members of IFJ.<sup>36</sup>

Overall, despite the specific position of editors in media outlets, there are no particular initiatives in BIH aimed at advancing their status and role.

## 5 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND CAREER PATH

There are huge variations in terms of the professional credentials of editors. The insights gained from this study indicate that the majority of editors have completed bachelor studies in journalism, law, economics or other fields, and worked for several years as journalists before becoming editors. However, in some private media outlets, editors have only high school diplomas. Not many editors did receive relevant awards for professional achievements, and multiple award winners are rare among them.<sup>37</sup>

Typically, editors have at some time in their professional development participated in informal education programmes. Some of the training opportunities mentioned by our respondents includes training in investigative journalism (organised by *Deutsche Welle*), training in reporting on sexual abuse victims (organised by the US Embassy), and training courses organised by Media Center Sarajevo, SEEMO, Thomson Reuters, Press Council in BIH and USAID.<sup>38</sup> Participants in this study emphasised in particular that continuing education is a necessary precondition for optimal performance by editors.

Foreign language proficiency is not indicated as either a particular asset or an obstacle in performing the role of editor, but our small survey indicates that the majority of editors have a good command of English, while some editors also have some command of one or two other languages.

---

36 Telephone conversation with Borka Rudić, 19 April 2016.

37 Two participants in the study have received several professional recognitions: Zoran Stevanović, until recently an editor at *N1* television, has received several international awards (including an Emmy Award for reporting from Afghanistan in 2002, Award for best producer in a news division 2005, and the Alfred I. duPont–Columbia University Award for the film *Romeo and Juliet in Sarajevo* from 1994), and Aladin Abdagić, newly appointed editor-in-chief of the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), who received several awards in the last four years (including three awards from the ACCOUNT BIH network for reporting on corruption in 2013 and 2014, a third-place EU Award for Investigative journalism, in 2015, and the Srđan Aleksić Award for professional reporting from USAID).

38 One respondent singles out the training received during his work at a media outlet from outside the region, including training courses focused on hostile security war zone training, editing practice, and training in journalistic ethics, management, finances, etc. (Zoran Stevanović, until recently news director at *N1*).

THE MAJORITY OF EDITORS HAVE COMPLETED BACHELOR STUDIES IN JOURNALISM, LAW, ECONOMICS OR OTHER FIELDS, AND WORKED FOR SEVERAL YEARS AS JOURNALISTS BEFORE BECOMING EDITORS. HOWEVER, IN SOME PRIVATE MEDIA OUTLETS, EDITORS HAVE ONLY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS.

The research results overall indicate that the media do not regularly place an emphasis on professional excellence when appointing editors. Most often the minimum requirements for solid performance are fulfilled, but political criteria and a cost-oriented personnel policy are often given preference. It is worth noting that biographies of editors are rarely available on the websites of media outlets,<sup>39</sup> suggesting that their professional background is not treated as a major asset in attracting an audience and promoting the public image of a particular media outlet.

Some media, however, do have both the financial means and the professional standards that allow them to pursue candidates with top credentials. The regional broadcasters recently founded with foreign capital, mainly *N1* and *Al Jazeera*, can afford such a policy. Many distinguished professionals from other media have transferred to these broadcasters on account of improved working conditions and better salaries.

## 6

### DIFFERENCES IN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF EDITORS

The monthly salary of some of the editors at private media outlets that responded to our survey is remarkably low, amounting to less than 500 euro. While in small media outlets it can be as low as the national average salary of 430 euro, it is considerably higher at the larger media outlets, in particular, at *Al Jazeera Balkans* and *N1* (the latter providing a salary of more than 2,500 euro to the news director). The salary of the majority of editors falls somewhere in between, and among respondents in this study, it is mostly between 1,000 and 2,000 KM (i.e. 511- 1,035 euro). The information on editors' salaries is treated as a business secret by CIN, for example, but also by the public service broadcaster *BHRT*.

While our respondents report that their salaries are paid regularly, some of them did indicate that the amounts are insufficient for the responsibilities and the work they are doing. One respondent reports that his rights to salary and health insurance are being blatantly violated: "*In the 15 years that I have been in*

THE MONTHLY SALARY OF SOME OF THE EDITORS AT PRIVATE MEDIA OUTLETS THAT RESPONDED TO OUR SURVEY IS REMARKABLY LOW, AMOUNTING TO LESS THAN 500 EURO.

39 We have searched the websites of twelve major media outlets: among public service broadcasters, *FTV* and *BHRT* name their editors but do not provide any biographical information, while *RTRS* does not even provide the impressum and contact of their editors. CIN and BIRN, both registered as non-governmental organisations, provide short biographies, while a private media outlet such as *BN* television does not provide any impressum. *Dnevni avaz* provides the names of editors but not contact information or any biographical information, while *Nezavisne novine* provides names and some contact information. *Al Jazeera Balkans* provides only the name of the general programming director, and general contact information. *N1* also provides the names of three programme directors and their contact details, but no biographical information. The major private broadcasters *Pink BIH* and *OBN* are entirely secretive, providing neither impressum, names, biographies nor contact information for the editors.

*this line of work – seven as a journalist, eight as an editor – I have been denied at least that many salary payments, not to mention contributions,”* wrote the editor-in-chief of a private media outlet.<sup>40</sup>

The editorial post is the only source of revenue for the majority of editors at media outlets, and based on our survey, the media seem to regularly prevent other similar engagements by their editors. The internal document of *Radio Free Europe*, Conflict of Interest Policy, can serve as a positive example, since it specifies the criteria on which to judge and possibly prevent any journalistic, political or other business engagement of its employees that might constitute conflict of interest.<sup>41</sup> There are no major controversies concerning other engagements by media editors, and doubts about conflicting relationships are mostly limited to a few examples of connected ownership of media outlets and advertising agencies/media production houses. The fact that in some media the director is simultaneously the editor is in itself seen as a further derogation of editorial independence. For instance, in nine out of 43 local television stations the position of both editor and director are held by the same person.<sup>42</sup>

## 7 THE POLITICAL SITUATION OF EDITORS

It is not usual for editors to be publicly declared members of political parties or organisations related to political parties, or for them to openly support the political agenda of a given party, but some of them are considered to be affiliated with particular parties and even appointed to their posts based on those affiliations. Concerns about political affiliations are particularly expressed in relation to public media outlets. A notable illustration of this general pattern was the case of Bakir Hadžiomerović, previously the editor of the political magazine “60 Minutes” at the public broadcaster *RTV FBiH*, who has been suspected of favouritism towards the Social Democratic Party (SDP) for years.<sup>43</sup> The fact that later, in the course of the general elections of 2014, he was nominated for

---

40 A respondent who submitted the questionnaire, with a request for anonymity, April 2016.

41 The document defines guidelines that distinguish between engagements that are discouraged and those that are encouraged, but requires that employees report to their supervisors, after which the supervisor will either allow or forbid such engagements. The basis for denial of such engagements is mainly the assessment of whether such an engagement could damage the public image of *RFE*. The guidelines specify that, for example, business investments or engagements in the broadcasting sector, or candidacy for public office or a position at a broadcasting institution constitute conflict of interest. See *RFE*, Conflict of Interest Policy, courtesy of Milenko Vočkić, editor-in-chief of *RFE*.

42 See CRA register. Available at: <http://rak.ba/bos/index.php?uid=1273787112>. Accessed 5 April 2016.

43 See, for example, <http://www.radiosarajevo.ba/novost/56027/enver-kazaz-reisove-mahaluse/56027>. Accessed 5 April 2016.

---

a member of the BH Presidency as an SDP candidate, was interpreted as a bare-faced confirmation of his long-standing alliance with the party. This, however, is only the least covert illustration of what is believed to be a general pattern. The public service broadcaster *RTRS* is most consistently mentioned for its political affiliations with *SNSD*, and editors are considered part of this political conformism. An article about a journalist who recently resigned from *RTRS* involved his general claims about the political pressure under which “*journalists, wilfully or not, become political workers,*”<sup>44</sup> nevertheless, as is usually the case, no information about particular pressures was given.

## 8

### CASES ILLUSTRATING THE POSITION OF EDITORS

We will present three patterns that illustrate the position and role of editors: the questionable appointments and demotions of editors at public media outlets, indicating political interference; the silent appointments and dismissals at private media outlets, indicating absolute discretion on the part of owners; and financial troubles accompanying editorial policies critical of major centres of power.

#### 8.1

##### APPOINTMENTS AND DEMOTIONS IN PUBLIC MEDIA DEPENDENT ON POLITICAL WILL

The public service broadcasters constitute a case in their own right. In recent years *RTVFBiH*, in particular, had several demotions of editors, the reasons for which remained largely vague, while their procedural legitimacy was also questioned. The most recent one was the demotion of the news editor of *Federal Television* Avdo Avdić, in September 2015, for reasons vaguely formulated by the management structures as a loss of confidence in his work and his relation with the management hierarchy. A variety of reasons were speculatively advanced, however, involving two major options: first, that it was a matter of internal disagreements and Avdić’s disapproval of the managerial decision to cancel the political magazine “*Mreža*” (Network), and second, that he was in fact dismissed by some officials of the *SDA* party.<sup>45</sup> Similarly covert

---

44 See <http://mojahercegovina.com/marko-vejic-za-mh-pritisak-politicara-na-novinare-je-postao-jeziv/>. Accessed 27 April 2016.

45 Some claimed it was the head of the party, because of Avdić’s statements assigning the leader of *SDA* party the responsibility for radical Islamists coming to *BiH*. Other sources suggest that it was organised by other factions within the party in order to portray Bakir Izetbegović as a person who asserts pressure on editorial policy of *FTV* and in order to take over the party. See [http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/23710/fama\\_est\\_zasto\\_je\\_smijenjen\\_urednik\\_ftv\\_a\\_avdo\\_avdic.html](http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/23710/fama_est_zasto_je_smijenjen_urednik_ftv_a_avdo_avdic.html). Accessed 27 April 2016. See also <http://bljesak.info/rubrika/vijesti/clanak/zasto-je-avdo-avdic-dobio-otkaz/131764>. Accessed 27 April 2016.

---



was the demotion from his editorial position of Bakir Hadžiomerović, in 2012,<sup>46</sup> allegedly as a result of growing influence by the SDA party in the fight between major political groups for greater power over this broadcaster.<sup>47</sup> Prior to that, the cancellation of the political magazine that he edited (“60 minutes”) was also believed to have had a political motive, some claiming that the SDP feared that, after coming to power, it would become a target for criticism by the magazine. Others claimed that it was the result of an agreement between the SDP and the SNSD, the leading political party in the Republic of Srpska which had often been the target of severe criticism within this program.<sup>48</sup> Whatever the reasons might be, in the case of Hadžiomerović, the procedures for dismissal were not observed, and following the court proceedings, *FTV* was ordered to reinstate him in his previous posts. In contrast, a similar court ruling in the case of Duška Jurišić was never realised, since her post was excluded from the internal job categorisation, thus setting a worrying precedent and contributing to the uncertainty of the position of editors.

*RTVFBiH* found itself in these controversies as a result of shifts in power-sharing at the level of the Federation of BiH, but the cases mentioned illustrate the position of editors in public media in general. The demotion of editors at the public service broadcaster *RTRS* and the public news agency *SRNA* from 2011 can also be interpreted in the light of particular political interests. A telling example is the appointment of Milica Džepina, who has been an editor of *SRNA* since 2011 and is considered to be affiliated with the ruling political party SNSD. Reportedly, she was functioning under a technical mandate, until she was officially appointed in January 2014, by then having fulfilled the necessary years of experience required for the post.<sup>49</sup> The appointment ignored the pleas that allegedly came from the employees of *SRNA* to stop the political interference and to appoint established media professionals to leading positions.<sup>50</sup> The clashes between leading persons in the *SRNA* and the heads of the political

---

46 The reasons listed by management concerned disrespect for journalistic norms and for the internal procedures at the broadcasters. See <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/saznajte-zasto-je-smijenjen-bakir-hadziomerovic/120601121>. Accessed 5 April 2016.

47 The dismissals of the previous news editor Damir Kaletović and the desk editor Željko Tica, were interpreted in a similar way. See, for example, <http://doznajemo.com/2012/05/29/bakir-hadziomerovic-za-doznajemo-com-ne-znam-nista-o-svojoj-navodnoj-smjeni-sacekajmo-da-vidimo-o-cemu-je-rijec/>. Accessed 27 April 2016.

48 See, for example, <http://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/svijet/151898/Zasto-je-Bakir-Hadziomerovic-ugasio-60-minuta.html>. Accessed 20 March 2016.

49 See <http://www.zurnal.info/novost/7584/bobar-kasipovic-i-rajko-vasic-postavili-svoje-poslusnike>. Accessed 27 March 2016. See also <http://www.rtvbn.com/348234/Dzepina-mimo-konkursa-jos-drma-Srnom>. Accessed 25 March 2016.

50 These pleas are, however, dismissed by the management of *SRNA*, who claimed that they did not come from the employees.

---

party SDS happened before,<sup>51</sup> and the recent accusations tossed between *SRNA* and the Minister of Security of BiH, Dragan Mektić, unfolding in April 2016,<sup>52</sup> can also be seen in the light of political confrontation between the two camps.<sup>53</sup>

## 8.2

### SILENT APPOINTMENTS AND DISMISSALS AT PRIVATE MEDIA

The practices concerning editors at private media outlets are much more clear-cut: “*There is no drama there, only pure execution*”, says Boro Kontić, Media Center Sarajevo. Appointments and dismissals at these media outlets happen in silence, and the reasons remain unclear. This was the case, for example, with Faruk Vele, who was abruptly dismissed from the position of editor at the *klix.ba* website in August 2014,<sup>54</sup> or with the recent change at *Hayat TV* when news director Aldin Arnautović stopped performing this role.<sup>55</sup> In similar cases, public insight into the position of editors is hindered, and the lack of transparency itself does not speak in favour of media integrity.

---

51 See, for example, <http://www.magazinplus.eu/agencija-srna-u-odbrani-lika-i-djela-predsjednika-rs-a-novinari-ili-izvrsioci-zadataka/> and <http://www.modricainfo.com/i-medijina-udaru-politike-slucaj-novinske-agencije-srna/>. Accessed 25 March 2016.

52 Thus, *SRNA* published the allegation that Minister Mektić had not completed his university education, as reported in the official biography published on the website of the Ministry of Security. Mektić published his diploma, accusing *SRNA* of campaigning against the Ministry. In return, Džepina accused Mektić of pressures and reasserted the truthfulness of their sources about Mektić’s education. An anonymous letter from the employees of *SRNA* published by some media includes numerous accusations against Džepina and other leading persons in the *SRNA*, but Džepina denied these accusations and stated that the letter did not originate from the employees but was fabricated as an attack on the *SRNA*. See, for example, <http://pressrs.ba/info/vijesti/dzepina-mektic-mi-je-poslao-14-sms-poruka-15-04-2016>. Accessed 30 April 2016. Needless to say, Mektić is associated with the SDS party.

53 It should be reasserted that in other public media political interference in the appointments of, firstly, directors, but subsequently editors as well, is believed to be strong. *FENA*, the news agency of the Federation of BiH, is mostly mentioned for the political appointment of its director “...*the leading positions in federal and cantonal public institutions were divided [among several parties], and the position of... director [of FENA]... was given to the SDP, and a man close to the party was appointed*” (interview with Eldin Hadžović, freelance journalist and media analyst, Sarajevo, 7 April 2016). The Public service broadcaster *BHRT* was least often mentioned for politicised appointments in recent years, but the clashes between the Board of Governors and then director Mehmed Agović in 2011 involved political connotations. See, for example, <http://www.mojportal.ba/novost/96386/mehmed-agovic-ponovo-nije-razrijesen-duznosti>. Accessed 25 March 2016. Later disagreements at *BHRT* were considered to be related to personal rather than political interests. See, for example, <http://doznajemo.com/2013/01/02/ne-stisava-se-bura-na-bhrt-u-u-pitanju-sudbina-gotovo-1-000-radnika/>. Accessed 30 March 2016.

54 A brief news item was published at <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/faruk-vele-vise-nije-urednik-portala-klix-ba/140804090> (accessed 25 March 2016), without specifying any rationale for cancelling his appointment.

55 He is still editor of some programmes at the same media outlet.

---

APPOINTMENTS AND  
DISMISSALS AT THESE  
MEDIA OUTLETS  
HAPPEN IN SILENCE,  
AND THE REASONS  
REMAIN UNCLEAR.

### 8.3

#### BITING THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU WHEN SUPPLIES ARE ALREADY SCARCE

The beginning of 2016 was marked by the termination of the print edition of one of the rare remaining political magazines in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Slobodna Bosna*. The reasons were financial in nature, but in part connected with the critical stance of this media outlet. The editor-in-chief, Senad Avdić, is known for his uncompromisingly critical attitude towards power-holders, but also for unusually harsh language and writing style. In a recently published interview, Avdić noted that the financial pressures came from frequent lawsuits.

*“The rulings doomed Slobodna Bosna. In the last two or three years we paid 200 thousand BAM for the emotional distress of various people that sued us and mostly to politicians [...] Simply, we lost 50 percent of these lawsuits, which is a rope around a neck of a small firm like ours,”* says Avdić. He also indicates that these financial troubles were aggravated by a decline of advertisers’ interest in print media outlets in general and particularly in those that do not refrain from critical reporting.<sup>56</sup>

The fate of the magazine *Dani* – which reportedly became close to the SBIH party before being sold in 2010 to Oslobođenje Ltd.<sup>57</sup> – illustrates how the interests of owners can easily both mould the ideological position and determine the transfer of ownership. While in the case of *Dani* this was facilitated by the fact that the same person held the positions of editor-in-chief and owner, in the case of *Slobodna Bosna*, several journalists and editors are the founders of Pres-Sing Ltd, which issues the magazine. Avdić argues that *Slobodna Bosna* will not share the same fate as *Dani* since “[...] *the way it was ended was inappropriate and uncollegial, and I would rather commit suicide than end like that,*” he concludes.<sup>58</sup>

---

56 *Slobodna Bosna*, for example, reported on corruption in media advertising and was the first to report on the Gibraltar case. See Čengić, “Svaki lider ISIL-a mogao bi se braniti presudom protiv Šešelja” (interview with Senad Avdić), *Start*, 5 April 2016, p. 16.

57 Connected with the Selimović family and relatedly with the SDA party. For more on *Dani* and the transfer of ownership, see Jovanović, “O čemu šutimo kad šutimo o Danima,” *Mediacentar\_online*, 17 November 2010. Available at: <http://www.media.ba/bs/menadzment-novinarstvo/o-cemu-sutimo-kad-sutimo-o-danima>. Accessed 17 March 2016.

58 Čengić, “Svaki lider ISIL-a mogao bi se braniti presudom protiv Šešelja” (interview with Senad Avdić), *Start*, 5 April 2016, p. 15.

---

Political interference and business reasoning are extremely influential in determining the position of media editors and their professional role in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Major patterns of influence on appointments and editorial policies are based on the political and business affiliations of owners, as well as on the main sources of funding on which survival of the media outlets depends. Government is one of the major funding sources, major advertisers are largely controlled by political parties, and options for alternative funding are scarce. Funding by international donors is seen as the only oasis safe from severe pressure on editorial policies.

Editors are already considered largely placated when the interests of the owners and related actors are at stake. It all starts with the appointment of editors who conform to particular business and political interests. Appointments in public media are highly politicised, and there have been no efforts to improve them. Norms on conflict of interest formally exist in the public media, as well as in some international and some local private media, but their spirit is consistently violated, although the wording might not be. Once the editors are appointed, there is a variety of patterns to guarantee that their editorial freedom is kept within the boundaries of the owners'/founders' interests. Even on the formal level, the assurances of editorial independence are worryingly scarce.

Labour laws and internal norms formally provide a sound status for editors, but in practice they do not protect editors from unwarranted demotion or pressures. One of our respondents admits sometimes compromising editorial decisions under pressure from the director of the media outlet. The reasons for editors not reporting such patterns more frequently presumably involves a combination of conformism, fear for their livelihood, perception that similar patterns would not be avoided in other media, but also a lack of trust in institutional support and solidarity by the professional community. All of that contribute to scepticism about the potential for positive resolution. Some previous court decisions about demotions, however, do provide some hope. The Association of BH Journalists provides legal help in such cases, but overall, the journalistic community is fragmented and rarely shows unified support, while professional organising specifically aimed at advancing the position of editors is non-existent.

Some media outlets can afford to provide the kind of better working conditions that are way beyond the majority of media outlets. At the same time the safeguards from both conflict of interests and guarantees of editorial independence, although easily introducible, are also utterly neglected.

Finally, professional integrity extends only as far as the media professionals do not touch interests of the owners and affiliates, therefore it is difficult to distinguish the line between editorial integrity and conformity. Nevertheless, all these

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE AND BUSINESS REASONING ARE EXTREMELY INFLUENTIAL IN DETERMINING THE POSITION OF MEDIA EDITORS AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL ROLE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.

factors – political interference, lack of transparency, lack of guarantees of editorial independence, economic vulnerability, and limited support for editors – contribute to a situation in which the profession is tarnished in the public eye. What a respondent says has become palpably true: “*It is not a respected job.*”<sup>59</sup>

Judging by the lack of public debate about or advocacy for improvement of the position of editors in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the professional community seems to have entirely given up on it.

## 10 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Media outlets, primarily the public ones, but also the private, should introduce/revise their internal documents in order to include/improve guarantees of editorial independence and thus restore their credentials and public trust. These changes of internal norms should include the following:
  - Specifying the minimum level of education and extent of professional experience required for the candidates for the position of editors, as well as any additional credentials that will be preferred in the selection process. Participants in this research study placed special emphasis on the experience and education of editors;
  - Depoliticisation of the process of appointment of media managers, and subsequently of the appointments of editors in the media should be a long-term goal, but in the meantime professional credentials should be made at least equally relevant as criteria in appointment procedures;
  - A clear distinction between the position of media owners and media editors, one that would serve to demonstrate at least the minimum professional credibility of a media outlet;
  - Specifying any conditions that disqualify editors for a particular position, mainly in relation to possible conflict of interests, based on particular political affiliations and including interests in other, media-related businesses;
  - Introducing regular consultations with the journalists within the media outlet about specific appointments and dismissals, as an additional check on the professional integrity of the candidates/editors;
  - Detailed specification of what violations of editorial work duties would justify dismissal, in order to render obsolete arbitrary decisions of the management in this regard.

Changes to the internal norms of media outlets should be promoted by the associations of media and by associations of journalists. International donors, as well as local government institutions should require media to

---

59 Željka Mihaljević, editor, *Radio Studio N*, telephone interview, 10 April 2016.

IT ALL STARTS WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF EDITORS WHO CONFORM TO PARTICULAR BUSINESS AND POLITICAL INTERESTS. APPOINTMENTS IN PUBLIC MEDIA ARE HIGHLY POLITICISED, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THEM.

provide guarantees of editorial independence in place as a condition of eligibility for receiving any grants they offer to media outlets.

2. Media outlets should improve transparency concerning the position of editors. This would include not only adopting adequate norms related to appointment, dismissal, duties, and the rights and responsibilities of editors, but also making them easily available. They should actively publish information about calls for editors, the applicants, appointment procedures and decisions, as well as publish the biographies of current editors, and specific information about the reasons for any demotions or dismissals. Public media have particular responsibilities towards the public in this regard, but for private media this would also be a way to demonstrate their professional credentials and gain public trust.
3. The labour contracts of editors should include a clause on editorial independence. This should be a matter of collective bargaining at the level of professional trade union organisations (FBiH and RS), but also at the level of trade unions in specific media organisations and by the associations of journalists.
4. The pressures on editors through financial conditioning should also be prevented through structural changes in patterns of government financing for the media. This would include clear criteria concerning the public interest in government funding for media, transparent procedures and independent bodies that decide on the allocations. Media-related civil society organisations, as well as independent state bodies should work on these long-term changes in the media sector. At the same time, donor support is an indispensable source of alternative financing that could facilitate greater editorial independence.
5. More consistent institutional support for editors exposed to pressures and attempts to influence their editorial decisions should be developed. This would include assurances that the judicial procedures related to the employment-related status of media editors will be treated promptly and with due attention. It would also mean assurances of legal support for editors in any conflict with the management, provided by the professional organisations. The safety of editors should be assured by state security bodies but also by the cautious practices of the media outlets and through support of other media (for example by republishing of information that led to the security threats, which would presumably defuse some of the threats against the particular media outlet/editor).
6. Continuing education for editors and potential future editors, involving up-to-date education in professional skills and techniques, including professional ethics, should be organised. This is a recommendation both for organisations that offer such training and for the international donors, but also for the editors themselves to seek and engage in opportunities for professional improvement.



7. Collective organisation around issues related to the position and role of editors should be introduced. Editors should exchange experiences on any problems they face concerning their position and editorial decisions (some respondents recommended periodic meetings of editors) and advocate for change. Professional integrity should be put back on the table, discussed, defended and promoted through collective organisation. Any substantial restoration of the role of editors and their public image can only be done from within the media community.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Duraković-Morankić, D. and Markuš, R., *Praktična primjena Zakona o radu Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine*, GOPA mbH, predstavništvo za Bosnu i Hercegovinu, Sarajevo, December 2015. Available at: <http://yep.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/YEP-ANALIZA-Prakticna-primjena-Zakona-o-radu-FBIH.pdf>. Accessed 12 March 2016.
- Hodžić, S., *Media integrity report: State-media financial relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, SEE Media Observatory, Peace Institute, Ljubljana, 2015. Available at: <http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/media-integrity-report-state-media-financial-relations-bosnia-and-herzegovina>. Accessed 27 March 2016.
- Hodžić, S. "Bosnia and Herzegovina", in *Labor Relations and Media: Analyzing patterns of labor relations in the media of SEENPM member countries*, SEENPM and Center for Independent Journalism, Chişinău, February 2008, pp. 92–130. Available at: [http://www.media.ba/mcsonline/files/shared/Labor\\_Relations\\_and\\_Media.pdf](http://www.media.ba/mcsonline/files/shared/Labor_Relations_and_Media.pdf). Accessed 10 March 2016.
- Jovanović, N., "O čemu štitimo kad štitimo o Danima," *Mediacentar\_online*, 17 November 2010. Available at: <http://www.media.ba/bs/menadzment-novinarstvo/o-cemu-sutimo-kad-sutimo-o-danima>. Accessed 17 March 2016.
- Kontić, B., *Genetically modified media*, Radar, SEE Media Observatory, 13 November 2015. Available at: <http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/genetically-modified-media>. Accessed 17 March 2016.
- Kurspahić, K., *Zločin u 19:30*, Mediacentar, Sarajevo, 2003. Available at: <http://www.media.ba/mcsonline/files/shared/Zlocinu1930.pdf>. Accessed 27 April 2016.
- Loza, T., "Afere koje su pokretale naše vlastite novine," *Mediacentar\_online*, 8 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.media.ba/bs/mediametar/afere-koje-su-pokretale-nase-vlastite-novine>. Accessed 31 April 2016.
- Udovičić, R., *Working Conditions for Journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Journalists in a Gap between Devastated Media and Legal Insecurity*, Sarajevo, February 2015. Available at: [http://www.media.ba/sites/default/files/working\\_conditions\\_bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina\\_march\\_2015.pdf](http://www.media.ba/sites/default/files/working_conditions_bosnia_and_herzegovina_march_2015.pdf). Accessed 10 March 2016.

## MEDIA REPORTS

- Arnautović, M. and Katana, E., "Nakon upada policije u Klix: Novinarstvo (ni)je zločin," *Radio Free Europe*, 30 December 2014. Available at: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/nakon-upada-policije-u-klix-novinarstvo-nije-zlocin/26769536.html>. Accessed 17 March 2016.
- Bjelica, N., "Bivši novinar RTRS-a Marko Vejić za MH: Pritisak političara na novinare je postao jeziv," *Moja Hercegovina*, 11 February 2016. Available at: <http://mojahercegovina.com/marko-vejic-za-mh-pritisak-politicara-na-novinare-je-postao-jeziv/>. Accessed 27 April 2016.
- BN TV, "Džepina još drma Srnom mimo konkursa" (republished from *Faktor* magazine), 18 June 2015. Available at: <http://www.rtvbn.com/348234/Dzjepina-mimo-konkursa-jos-drma-Srnom>. Accessed 25 March 2016.
- Čengić, R., "Svaki lider ISIL-a mogao bi se braniti presudom protiv Šešelja" (interview with Senad Avdić), *Start*, 5 April 2016, pp. 12-16 and 70-71.
- G. D., "Novinar Siniša Vukelić napadnut u Banjoj Luci," *Klix.ba*, 9 October 2014. Available at: <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/novinar-sinisa-vukelic-napadnut-u-banjoj-luci/141009086>. Accessed 17 March 2016.
- Doznajemo.com, "Ne stišava se bura na BHRT-u: U pitanju sudbina gotovo 1000 radnika!?" 2 January 2013. Available at: <http://doznajemo.com/2013/01/02/ne-stisava-se-bura-na-bhrt-u-u-pitanju-sudbina-gotovo-1-000-radnika/>. Accessed 30 March 2016.
- Doznajemo.com, "Ostajemo bez TV programa? Radnici BHRT-a pripremaju štrajk..." 17 January 2013. Available at: <http://doznajemo.com/2013/01/17/ostajemo-bez-tv-programa-radnici-bhrt-a-pripremaju-strajk/>. Accessed 30 March 2016.
- R.I. "Zašto je Avdo Avdić dobio otkaz," *Bljesak.info*, 5 September 2015. Available at: <http://bljesak.info/rubrika/vijesti/clanak/zasto-je-avdo-avdic-dobio-otkaz/131764>. Accessed 27 April 2016.
- Kazaz, E., "Reusove mahaluse," *Radio Sarajevo*, 14 June 2011. Available at: <http://www.radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala/ja-muslim/enver-kazaz-reisove-mahaluse/56027>. Accessed 5 April 2016.
- Klix.ba, "BH novinari: 2015. je godina borbe za slobodu medija i prava novinara u BiH," 5 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/bh-novinari-2015-je-godina-borbe-za-slobodu-medija-i-prava-novinara-u-bih/150105111>. Accessed 17 March 2016.
- Klix.ba, "Faruk Vele više nije urednik portala Klix.ba," 4 August 2014. Available at: <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/faruk-vele-vise-nije-urednik-portala-klix-ba/140804090>. Accessed 25 March 2016.
- Klix.ba, "Jerinić: Upad u prostorije Klix.ba drastičan pritisak na medije," 29 December 2015. Available at: <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/jerinic-upad-u-prostorije-klix-ba-drastican-pritisak-na-medije/141229078>. Accessed 17 March 2016.
- Klix.ba, "Saznajte zašto je smijenjen Bakir Hadžiomerović," 1 June 2012. Available at: <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/saznajte-zasto-je-smijenjen-bakir-hadziomerovic/120601121>. Accessed 5 April 2016.
- Klix.ba, "Urednike portala Tacno.net u Mostaru napao uposlenik SIPA-e?" 2 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/urednike-portala-tacno-net-u-mostaru-napao-uposlenik-sipa-e/150102084>. Accessed 13 March 2016.

- Kovačević, Lj., "U podmukloj borbi Rajko Vasić nokautirao Dragana Davidovića," *Žurnal.info*, 27 August 2012. Available at: <http://www.zurnal.info/novost/14911/-u-podmukloj-borbi-rajko-vasic-nokautirao-dragana-davidovica>. Accessed 30 March 2016.
- Kovačević, Lj., "Bobar, Kasipović i Rajko Vasić postavili svoje poslušnike," *Žurnal.info*, 2 June 2011. Available at: <http://www.zurnal.info/novost/7584/bobar-kasipovic-i-rajko-vasic-postavili-svoje-poslusnike>. Accessed 27 March 2016.
- Magazin Plus, "Agencija Srna u odbrani lika i djela predsjednika RS-a: Novinari i(li) izvršio ci zadataka," 17 February 2016. Available at: <http://www.magazinplus.eu/agencija-srna-u-odbrani-lika-i-djela-predsjednika-rs-a-novinari-ili-izvrsioci-zadataka/>. Accessed 25 March 2016.
- Modriča.info, "I mediji na udaru politike: Slučaj Novinske agencije SRNA" (parts republished from *Nezavisne novine, Istinio* and *Frontal*), 12 February 2016. Available at: <http://www.modricainfo.com/i-mediji-na-udaru-politike-slucaj-novinske-agencije-srna/>. Accessed 25 March 2016.
- Moj portal, "Mehmed Agović ponovo nije razriješen dužnosti," 12 September 2011. Available at: <http://www.mojportal.ba/novost/96386/mehmed-agovic-ponovo-nije-razrijesen-duznosti>. Accessed 25 March 2016.
- Press RS, "Džepina: Mektić mi je poslao 14 SMS poruka," 15 April 2016. Available at: <http://pressrs.ba/info/vijesti/dzepina-mektic-mi-je-poslao-14-sms-poruka-15-04-2016>. Accessed 30 April 2016.
- Slobodna Bosna, "FAMA EST: Zašto je smijenjen urednik FTV-a Avdo Avdić?" 4 September 2014. Available at: [http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/23710/fama\\_est\\_zasto\\_je\\_smijenjen\\_urednik\\_ftv\\_a\\_avdo\\_avdic.html](http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/23710/fama_est_zasto_je_smijenjen_urednik_ftv_a_avdo_avdic.html). Accessed 27 April 2016.
- Srzić, A., "Zašto je Bakir Hadžiomerović ugasio '60 minuta'?" *tportal.hr*, 4 October 2011. Available at: <http://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/svijet/151898/Zasto-je-Bakir-Hadziomerovic-ugasio-60-minuta.html>. Accessed 20 March 2016.
- Zornija, A., "Bakir Hadžiomerović za doznajemo.com: Ne znam ništa o svojoj navodnoj smjeni, sačekajmo da vidimo o čemu je riječ," *Doznajemo.com*, 29 May 2012. Available at: <http://doznajemo.com/2012/05/29/bakir-hadziomerovic-za-doznajemo-com-ne-znam-nista-o-svojoj-navodnoj-smjeni-sacekajmo-da-vidimo-o-cemu-je-rijec/>. Accessed 27 April 2016.

## LAWS, REGULATIONS AND INTERNAL DOCUMENTS OF MEDIA OUTLETS

- Law on Public Enterprises in the Federation of BiH, Official Gazette of the Federation of BiH, 8/05, 81/08 and 22/09.
- Law on Public Enterprises in the Republic of Srpska, Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska, 75/04.
- Libel Law of the Federation of BiH, Official Gazette of the Federation of BiH, 59/02 and 73/05.
- Libel Law of the Republic of Srpska, Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska, 37/01.
- Labour Law of the Federation of BiH, Official Gazette of the Federation of BiH, 62/15.
- Labour Law of the Republic of Srpska, Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska, 1/16.
- Communications Regulatory Agency of BiH, Rule 76/2015 on Provision of Radio Media Services. Available at: <http://rak.ba/eng/index.php?uid=1328108149>. Accessed 4 May 2016.

Communications Regulatory Agency of BiH, Rule 77/2015 on Provision of Audio-visual Media Services, Available at <http://rak.ba/eng/index.php?uid=1328108149>. Accessed 4 May 2016.

Editorial Principles of Public Radio-television System of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Available at: [http://www.rtvfbih.ba/loc/template.wbsp?wbf\\_id=173](http://www.rtvfbih.ba/loc/template.wbsp?wbf_id=173). Accessed 28 April 2016.

Radio and Television of the Federation of BiH, Pregled radnih mjesta Radio-televizije Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine – Dopune,

Sarajevo, March, 2013. Available at: <http://www.rtvfbih.ba/doc/dopune%20pregleda%20radnih%20mjesta%20mart%202013.pdf>. Accessed 4 May 2016.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Professional Code, October 2001, courtesy of Milenko Vočkić, editor, RFE (document in the project archive).

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Conflict of Interest Policy, October 2001, courtesy of Milenko Vočkić, editor, RFE (document in the project archive).

## OTHER

Communications Regulatory Agency of BiH, Register of licensees for television broadcasting through terrestrial signal. Available at: <http://rak.ba/bos/index.php?uid=1273787112>. Accessed 5 April 2016.

Communications Regulatory Agency of BiH, Register of licensees for radio broadcasting through terrestrial signal. Available at: <http://rak.ba/bos/index.php?uid=1273787112>. Accessed 5 April 2016.

Press Council in BiH, *Outline of Citizens' Complaints Regarding the Writing of the Press and Online media in 2015*. Available at: [http://english.vzs.ba/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2079%3A-year-2015&catid=22%3Acases-outline&Itemid=23&lang=en](http://english.vzs.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2079%3A-year-2015&catid=22%3Acases-outline&Itemid=23&lang=en). Accessed 30 March 2016.

## LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Faruk Borić, director of the *FENA* news agency, member of the Council of Communications Regulatory Agency of BiH, Sarajevo, 8 April 2016.

Eldin Hadžović, freelance journalist and media analyst, Sarajevo, 7 April 2016.

Boro Kontić, editor, Mediacentar, written interview, 12 April 2016.

Željka Mihaljević, editor-in-chief, *Radio Studio N*, telephone interview, 10 April 2016.

Suzana Rađen Todorčić, editor-in-chief, *BN Television*, telephone interview, 14 April 2016.

Editor at a public service broadcaster who requested anonymity, 14 April 2016.

## WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRES

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Aladin Abdagić, editor-in-chief, Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), April 2016. | Erna Mačkić, editor, BIRN BIH, April 2016.                                    |
| Rasim Borčak, editor, <i>Radio FBiH</i> , May 2016.                                    | Dario Pušić, editor-in-chief, <i>Dnevni list</i> , April 2016.                |
| Alenka Bruck, acting editor of news programming at <i>BHRT</i> , April 2016.           | Zoran Stevanović, former news director of <i>NI</i> , April 2016.             |
| Nermin Đapo, editor-in-chief, <i>RTV Slon</i> , May 2016.                              | Editor at a public service broadcaster who requested anonymity, April 2016.   |
| Berislav Jurič, editor, <i>bljesak.info</i> website, April 2016.                       | Former editor at a private radio station who requested anonymity, April 2016. |

## ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS/REPLIES

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Aldin Arnautović, editor, <i>RTV Hayat</i> , written correspondence, 25-26 April 2016. | 26 April 2016, additional telephone contacts, 19 and 25 April 2016.                   |
| Mehmed Halilović, media law expert, written reply, 26 April 2016.                      | Milenko Vočkić, editor-in-chief, <i>RFE</i> , written correspondence, May 2016.       |
| Borka Rudić, secretary general, Association of BH Journalists, telephone interview,    | Ljiljana Zurovac, director, Press Council in BIH, telephone interview, 26 April 2016. |

## AUTHOR

**SANELA HODŽIĆ** holds a MA in Gender Studies from the Center of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Sarajevo, and BA in Psychology, and is currently employed as a Research Coordinator at the Foundation Mediacentar Sarajevo, a partner organisation in the SEE Media Observatory.



This report has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of the Peace Institute and the author, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

The report has been produced within the project South East European Media Observatory. <http://www.mediaobservatory.net>.

**AUTHOR** Sanela Hodžić  
**EDITOR** Brankica Petković  
**ASSISTANT EDITOR** Saša Panić  
**LANGUAGE EDITOR** Amy Kennedy  
**PUBLISHER** Peace Institute, Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies, Metelkova 6, si-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, <<http://www.mirovni-institut.si>>  
**DESIGN** DAK, Ljubljana, May 2016

**THE EDITORS' ROLE IN MEDIA INTEGRITY PROTECTION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA BETWEEN STRONG INTERFERENCE AND WEAK SUPPORT**